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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LaGrange Child Care Provider Arrested for Attempt to Defraud Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program

*Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning taking aggressive action
to prosecute those who would commit fraud*

ATLANTA, Ga., (April 12, 2013) – The former owner of a day care home in LaGrange, Georgia, has been arrested by police there following allegations that she sought to defraud Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program. Thirty-three year old Nikki Alford Dennis of LaGrange is charged with two counts of criminal solicitation for false statements and writings. She allegedly contacted other child care providers in the area and asked them to accept CAPS money for children not in their care. At the time, Ms. Dennis was unlicensed and unlawfully caring for CAPS eligible children. It appears she planned to reclaim the children through CAPS once she became licensed. The other providers refused knowing it violated the regulations and integrity of the program.



Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) says Ms. Dennis operated a licensed family day care home at 109 N. Pointe Drive from July 31, 2008, through July 13, 2011. She closed that center without reporting it to DECAL and began operating an unlicensed child care center at 1097 Young Mill Road in LaGrange under the name Kids United Childcare Center.

DECAL issued cease and desist orders and learned of the allegations of possible fraud against CAPS during its investigation into the unlicensed center.

Ms. Dennis recently applied for a state license to operate the group day care home on Young Mill Road but DECAL denied the application based on her soliciting false statements from other providers. She appealed the decision but it was upheld by the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH).

A recent state audit of the CAPS program from FY 2008-2011 found a need for improved business practices that would lessen the likelihood of fraud, waste and abuse. DECAL is working with local, state and federal law enforcement to prosecute suspected fraud and has appointed a 45-member task force as part of a major review and overhaul of the program.

The over \$200-million CAPS program provides subsidized child care to low income families, currently serving 48,000 children per month. On July 1, 2012, the CAPS program moved to DECAL from the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Family and Children Services. Governor Nathan Deal directed the move as part of his FY 2013 state budget.

“This case does not represent a large amount of money, however, no amount of waste or fraud or even attempted waste or fraud will be tolerated,” said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. “We will continue to turn these cases over for criminal prosecution and seek restitution wherever it is appropriate. We appreciate the cooperation of the child care providers approached by Ms. Dennis and the LaGrange Police Department in making the arrest and pressing charges.”

About Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

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The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.